

The Truth About Stories by Thomas King

“Do the stories we tell reflect the world as it truly is, or did we simply start off with the wrong story?” (King 26). This thought-provoking quote comes from masterful storyteller Thomas King’s book *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative*, where he presents the belief that stories lay the foundation of viewpoints which cultures and societies are built upon, including the effect stories have on cultural identities, social class, and morality. King says that the stories of his life have had a profound impact on his cultural identity, stating that “stories can control our lives” (King 2). He talks about the story of his Native American father leaving his family at a young age, and the struggle his Greek mother had to endure during a time where women were discouraged in the workplace. King always imagined what it would be like meeting his father, Robert, and dreamed that it would be in “a dark, dank bar, stinking of sorrow, a bar where men who had deserted their families went to drink and die” (King 6), and would later add that he would just leave his father there, just as he did to King’s family years ago. Additionally, King chooses to primarily identify as Indigenous rather than Greek. Even though he never knew his father and had strong resentment towards him, the stories throughout his life helped shape his upbringing and growth as a person. Thomas’ personal and cultural identity choice displays his way of trying to sympathize with the difficulties his mother due to gender inequality, and to understand what his father’s perspective of the world was. Secondly, King would go on to say that stories create the way society is structured, and how humans think of themselves compared to the rest of the world, or even each other. King explains this using two different creation stories: a Native story, and the Judeo-Christian story of Genesis. The humorous Native story presents the ideas of equality, with animals included in the creation of the world. Genesis has a more serious tone and suggests a hierarchy in society: God on the top, then humans, then animals, and plants on the bottom. The themes of cooperation and curiosity are found in the Native story. In contrast, God is the sole creator in Genesis, and the first humans, Adam and Eve, are punished for their willfulness, leading to evil being let loose in the world. King alludes to the idea the dichotomies from the Bible have structured society. War or peace, white or black, rich or poor. A sort of competition between good and evil, with no middle ground. While curiosity led to the creation of the world in the Native story, evil and chaos is unleashed when proper law and order is disobeyed. The Native story isn’t well known or heard of often, as it’s an oral story. Genesis, however, comes from the Bible, the world’s best-selling book, so it has major influence around the world, especially in Western culture. King highlights that these stories of our world directly affect the way the world functions, and that most do not even realize it either. King states that “to every action, there is a story (King 29). Now that you know, think about it: What stories are you creating?”